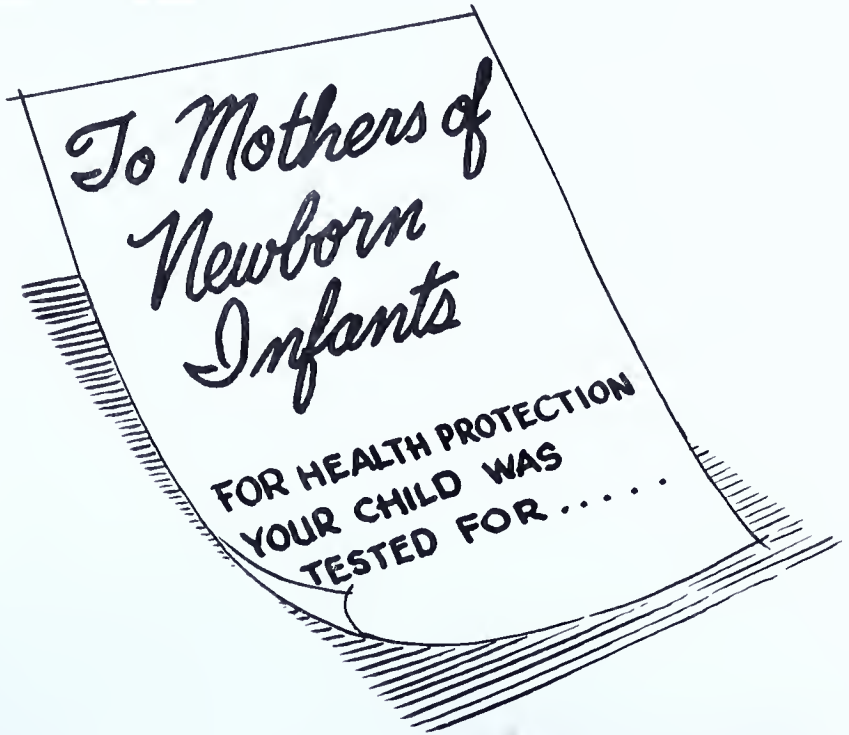
PHE 45.2 T627



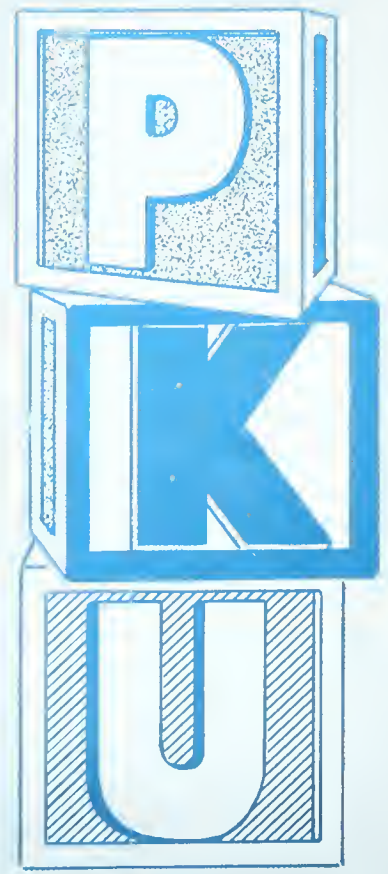
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
DIVISION OF MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH

HCH-10234 P

As part of the health care given newborn infants at this hospital, your baby has just received a test for phenylketonuria, or PKU as it is usually called.

PKU is a rather rare disease which is inherited. It occurs when a baby is born without a certain substance (an enzyme) in its body. A child's body needs this substance to use (metabolize) a common protein food product (phenylalanine). In short, the child cannot properly utilize the milk it drinks. If this disease is not found and treated very soon after birth, it will quickly cause mental retardation. With treatment consisting of a scientifically controlled diet begun within the first few weeks of life and continued, the child will grow and develop normally.

This disease appears about once in ten thousand newborns (1 in 10,000). Therefore the likelihood that your child will have this condition is slight. However, testing can eliminate the possibility that your child might have this disease and remain undetected until retardation is noted.

The test your baby was given is a simple blood test, called the "Guthrie Test." Sometimes the first test is not satisfactory. You may be approached after your infant has left the hospital to have the test repeated in order to make certain that all is well. If further information or tests are needed, or if the test shows that your baby may have PKU, your physician will tell you. If you have not heard from your family physician within four weeks, the test was negative and your baby does not have PKU.

This test is a service for babies, offered to all hospitals in Pennsylvania by the Pennsylvania Department of Health.